

NSC BRIEFING

19 June 1953

LEBANON

- I. Events are moving very rapidly. An uneasy lull in fighting prevails in Beirut.
- A. President Chamoun--after panicking night of 16th--feels fairly optimistic and keeps prodding General Shihab to take more forceful action against the rebels. Chamoun fears that the rebels will make an all-out effort to seize control in Beirut within the next day or two. He showed to US embassy--along with his wife's jewels--a document signed by entire cabinet authorizing Chamoun to request US/UK intervention at his discretion.
- B. Chamoun said intervention request would hinge on willingness of General Shihab to proceed with attacks against the rebels and break their back.

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IV. Christian pro-government partisans in Beirtu patrolling Christian quarters and water front. Some firing from Moslem Basta quarter into Christian quarter on 17 June.

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A. Reported that rebels planning to seize tall buildings near American University in order to fire from rooftops.

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[] rebels will make major effort using VAR fedayeen very soon.

Primary objective will be presidential palace. Ammunition being distributed in large quantities in Basta on 17-18 June.

B. President Chamoun has stated that interrogation of Syrian prisoners reveals 25 Syrian officers and NCO's in Basta working with opposition. He plans to turn confessions over to UN observers.

V. Jordanian Prime Minister Rifai has stated his government will take any action requested by Beirut to "preserve Lebanon's independence". He commented "nothing short of armed intervention will save the situation."

VI. Prime Minister Sami Sulh views the situation in a much dimmer light than Chamoun and is pushing for intervention.

VII. On the other side, Nasir's "mouthpiece" Hasanayn Kaykal told the American ambassador in Cairo that Nasir feels he has been played for a sucker" by the SS in order to neutralize him in the Lebanese crisis.

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A. Damascus radio on 17 June called directly on Lebanese army to join rebel side.

VIII. Arab Union officials, who are not sanguine over the future of their union in any case, fear Iraq may be next Nasir target after Lebanon.

A. Prime Minister Nuri Said has made it clear that he is not satisfied with American and British offers of aid.

- 1. He insists that Kuwait must join the Arab Union and has gained support of top Jordanian leaders for this.**
- 2. He wants \$6,000,000 more than the \$29,000,000 offered, but is willing to let the case of Kuwait stand until next March, when he insists it must join the union.**
- 3. Notwithstanding his objections, he is allowing a deficit budget to be passed.**

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